

„I got imprisoned for rock and roll”. Andrzej
Stasiuk and the Literature of Periphery

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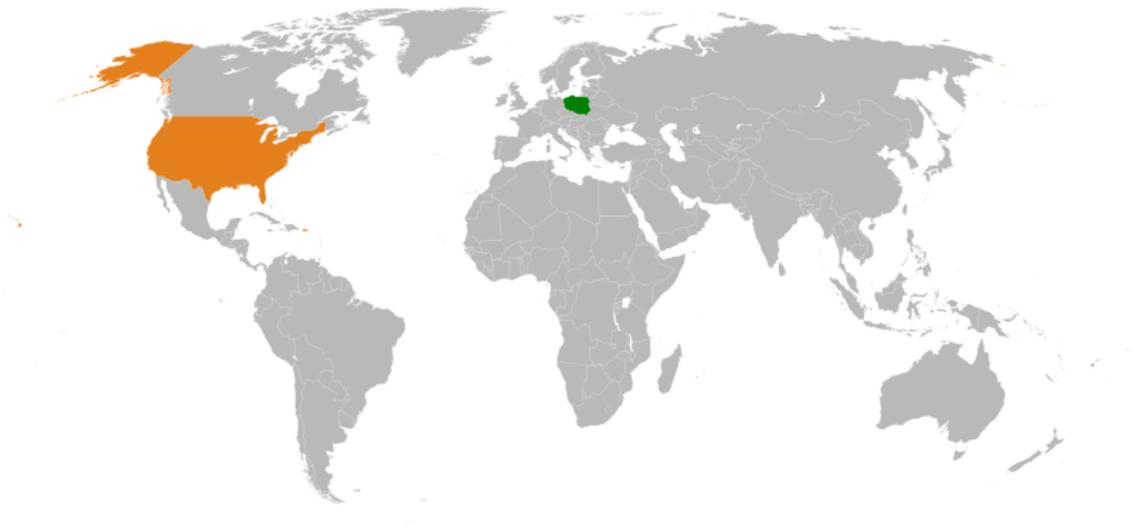
- Cultural periphery

Andrzej Stasiuk. An Introduction

Andrzej Stasiuk



USA — Poland



- la Pologne, « c'est-à-dire nulle part » (Alfred Jarry, Ubu the King, 1888)
- Poland, "that is to say nowhere"

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



Andrzej Stasiuk born on Sept., 25th, 1960 in Warsaw

Warsaw in the 1960.



Warsaw in the 1960.



Warsaw in the 1960.



Warsaw in the 1960.



Warsaw in the 1960.



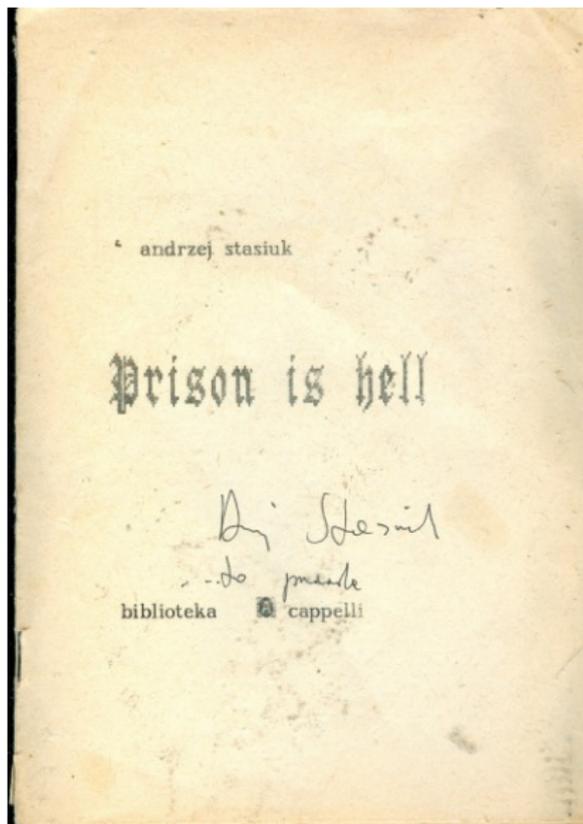


attended Professional High School of Car Factory in Warsaw



1985 — anti-communist „Freedom and Peace” Movement

Andrzej Stasiuk — literary debut (1989?)



These two words in English are one of the most frequently performed tattoos in Polish prisons.¹

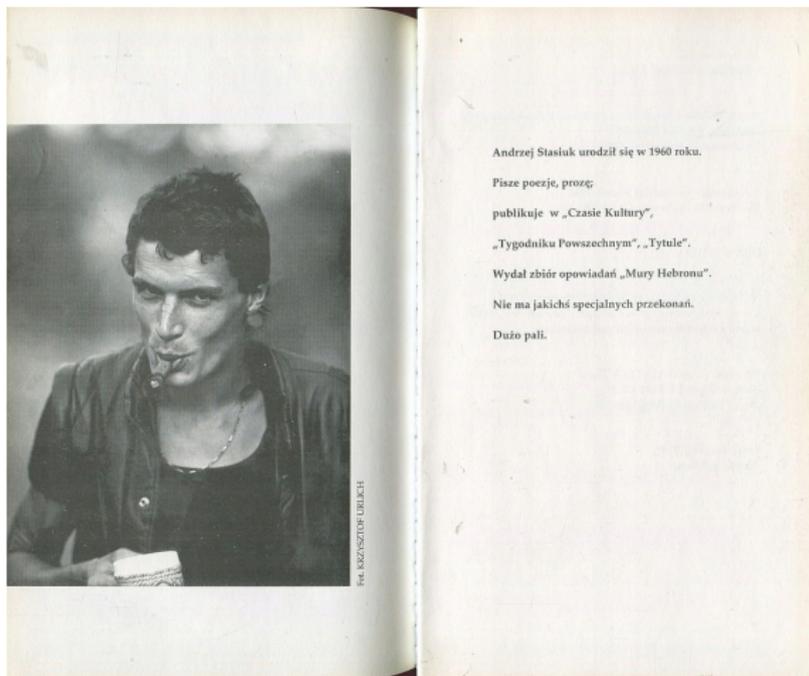
¹Andrzej Stasiuk, *Prison is hell*, Warsaw 1989?

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



since 1990 publishing poetry and prose in „Po prostu”, „bruLion”, „Czas Kultury”, „Magazyn Literacki”, „Tygodnik Powszechny” and others

Andrzej Stasiuk in 1994



Andrzej Stasiuk in 1994: „He doesn't have any special beliefs. Smokes a lot”

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



1986 — left Warsaw and settled in the mountains Low Beskids: Czarne

Low Beskids — Czarne



Low Beskids — Czarne



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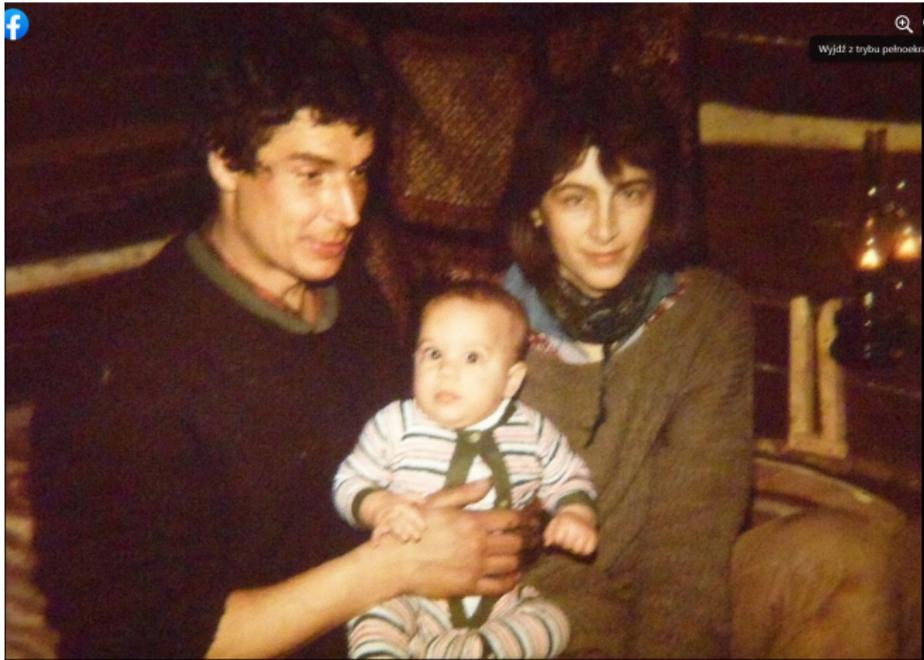
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Beskid Niski - Czarne



St. Dimitri Orthodox Church, 1783-1993 at Czarne

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



with his wife, Monika Sznajderman, and his daughter, Antonina in 1999

Andrzej Stasiuk — decorations



2005 — decorated with the Silver Medal "Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis"

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



2015 — became the artistic director of the Zygmunt Haupt Festival

Andrzej Stasiuk — bio



2018 — musical group Haydamaky, album „Mickiewicz, Stasiuk, Haydamaky”

Literary works of Andrzej Stasiuk

1. **Prison is hell**, 1989
2. **Mury Hebronu**, 1992
3. **Wiersze miłosne i nie**, 1994
4. **Biały kruk**, 1995
5. **Opowieści galicyjskie**, 1995
6. **Przez rzekę**, 1996
7. **Dukla**, 1997
8. **Dwie sztuki (telewizyjne) o śmierci**, 1998
9. **Jak zostałem pisarzem (próba autobiografii intelektualnej)**, 1998
10. **Dziewięć**, 1999
11. **Moja Europa. Dwa Eseje o Europie zwanej Środkową**, 2000 (with Jurij Andruchowycz)
12. **Tekturowy samolot**, 2000
13. **Opowieści wigilijne**, 2000 (with Olga Tokarczuk and Jerzy Pilch)
14. **Zima**, 2001
15. **Jadąc do Babadag**, 2004
16. **Noc. Słowiańsko-germańska tragifarsa medyczna**, 2005
17. **Fado**, 2006
18. **Ciemny las**, 2007
19. **Dojczland**, 2007
20. **Czekając na Turka**, 2009
21. **Taksim**, 2009
22. **Dziennik pisany później**, 2010
23. **Grochów**, 2012
24. **Nie ma ekspresów przy żółtych drogach**, 2013
25. **Wschód**, 2014
26. **„Życie to jednak strata jest”. Andrzej Stasiuk w rozmowach z Dorotą Wodecką**, 2015
27. **Kucając**, 2015
28. **Osiółkiem**, 2016
29. **Kroniki beskidzkie i światowe**, 2018
30. **Przewóz**, 2021

1. The White Raven (Serpent's Tail, 2001)
2. Tales of Galicia (Twisted Spoon 2005)
3. Nine (Harcourt, 2007)
4. Fado (Dalkey Archive 2009)
5. On the Road to Babadag (Harcourt Brace US, Harvill Secker UK, 2011),
6. Dukla (Dalkey Archive, 2011).

Andrzej Stasiuk's literary works — all the translations

1. German (19)
2. French (16)
3. Czech (10)
4. Ukrainian (10)
5. Hungarian (9)
6. Spanish (7)
7. Swedish (7)
8. **English (6)**
9. Russian (6)
10. Slovakian (6)
11. Slovenian (5)
12. Bulgarian (5)
13. Italian (4)
14. Croatian (3)
15. Romanian (2)
16. Dutch (1)

- Award of the „Kultura” Foundation (1994)
- Kościelski Prize (1995)
- Twin Towns Toruń-Getynga S.B. Linde Award (2002)
- Nike Literary Prize (2005, Jadąc do Babadag)
- A. Stifer Prize for Writers from Central Europe (2005)
- Gdynia Literary Award (2010, Taksim)
- Award of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage for lifetime achievement (2011)
- Slovenian International Literary Award „Vilenica” (2008)
- Warsaw Literary Award in the field of prose (2015)
- Central Europe Literary Award Angelus (2015, Wschód)
- Austrian State Prize for European Literature (2016)

Literature of periphery

Literature of periphery (Hubert Orłowski)

- Bruno Schulz, Stanisław Vincenz, Marek Nowakowski, Sokrat Janowicz, Zygmunt Haupt

- John Steinbeck, William Faulkner

Forms of periphery in the work of Stasiuk

Biographical periphery

*"Dad was one of the millions who participated in this migration of peoples from the countryside to the cities. (...) The city tempted him with its possibilities. He built a house in the suburbs quite quickly, there was a garden around it, and in winter we fed the deer."*²

²Life, however, is a loss 2015

*"Peasants' sons and grandsons came from the lost villages to turn into workers. They changed from villagers to city dwellers. Just like my father."*³

*"They didn't smell the stables. They didn't trudge along the furrow of the potato. Mother used perfume. They had an adapter and vinyl records with Połomski and Kunicka"*⁴

³There are no expresses on the yellow roads 2013

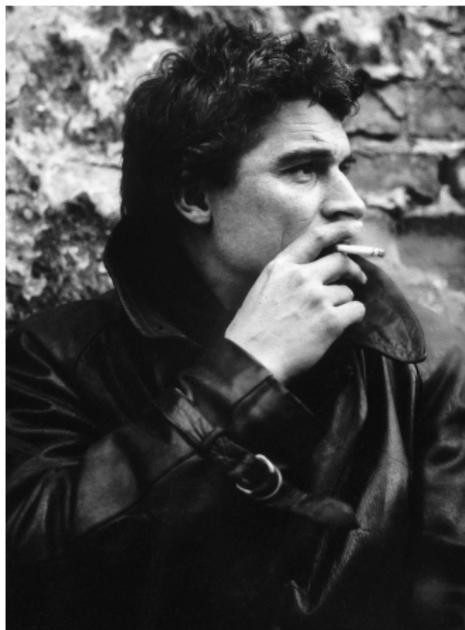
⁴East 2014

In those days, there were no garbage cans in the villages. There was also no garbage.

You bought all sorts of things, but not much was left of them. The sugar was left over into paper bags that could be burned in an oven or used again. The vinegar, oil, and vodka bottles could be sold at a store for a fairly substantial profit. You could also use them to store cherry and raspberry juices made at home.”⁵

⁵Fado 2006

Biographical and geographical periphery



"I was a city boy" (Fado 2006)

- the suburbia of a big city vs. village
- suburbia vs. center

Social periphery

"Economics of scarcity" vs. asceticism



"There was always something missing. Either beer, or mugs or cash. We thought it was normal and it will always be. We didn't want to change anything"⁶

⁶How I Became a Writer 1998

Money vs. music

"We never talked about money. We had more important matters. Money is really shit. We argued till we dropped out, but never about these things. We jumped in our eyes about who was better: whether Oscar Peterson or Erroll Garner"⁷

⁷How I Became a Writer 1998

*"Actually, I was about to go back, but I changed my mind. Just like I used to think before going to school and then before leaving the bus at the stop where was my workplace. Just general discouragement like: fuck, I'm not going... Something was swarming in my head, freedom, that wear long hair and smoke cigarettes, but in fact I had a fucking bout of boredom and disaffection of the reality available in this particular form."*⁸

⁸How I Became a Writer 1998

Political periphery

Communist era

There was the middle of communism. I don't remember anybody complaining. The people knew worse masters and remembered the times of true slavery. [...] I read about Chinese poverty and nibbled on a dry sausage.⁹

Peasants and paupers from generations, now they were eating slowly and without saying a word. With no fear of running out¹⁰

Writer's grandfather

He was given a plenty of land, he no longer had to save kerosene, and in the municipal office he drank with officials as an equal. He did not bend his spine in front of anyone, he did not stand at anyone's door with a cap in his hand. The gentry are gone, the rich are gone. [...] The new authorities called him "Mr. Klonowski"¹¹

⁹ Journal written later 2010

¹⁰ East 2014

¹¹

During a travel through Kazakhstan:

I couldn't remember the first time I saw Vanishing Point. Did they let it show in communism at all? Perhaps as an example of capitalist enslavement of the individual? Maybe. Well, it's a movie of the kind you know, even if you haven't watched it. You know them like an old recurring dream. The Challenger had gearshift as long as the one in a tractor. Kowalski sometimes looked like Dylan in the mid-1970s. A Californian policewoman at command headquarters asks, "Can anyone pronounce his name?"¹²

¹²On a donkey, 2016

East, West, and personal identity



I was a child of communism and American pop culture¹³

¹³On a donkey, 2016

Speeches of communist leaders

*"It was hard to imagine boredom, stillness and immobility in more perfect form. [...] For me, a pupil of the middle class People's Republic, the revolution will always take the form of an ugly face speaking with a dead tongue in the dead light of the TV set."*¹⁴

In an airport at Bratsk, Russia

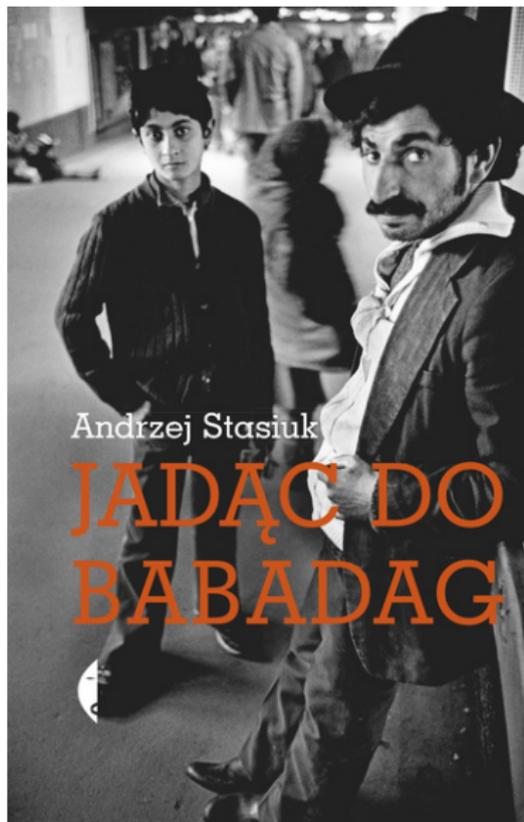
*"Here I found traces of an experiment on a global scale. Communism was not a materialist revolution. It was essentially anti-materialist. It tried to invalidate matter, to negate its usefulness, its necessity"*¹⁵

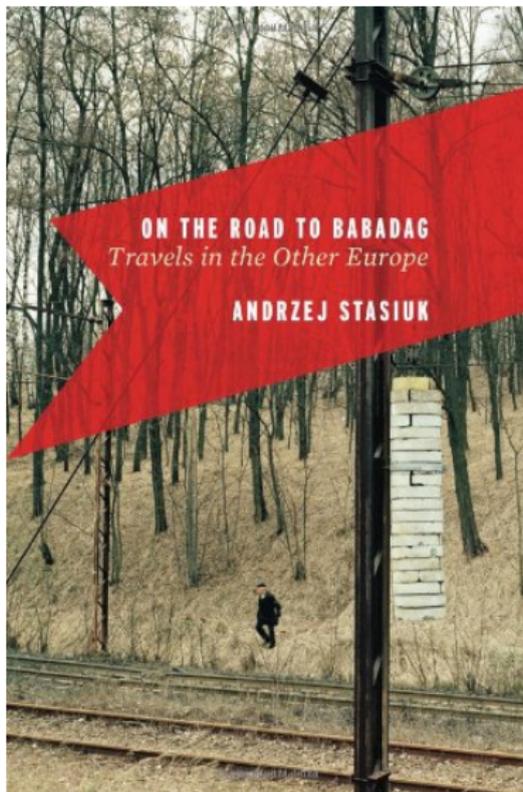
¹⁴Cardboard Plane, 2000

¹⁵East 2014

- Communism vs. capitalism
- national homogeneity of Poland, contrasted to the melting pot of nations of south-central Europe

Cultural periphery





travel phenomenology

"It is good to come to a country you know practically nothing about. Your thoughts grow still, useless. Everything must be rebuilt. In a country you know nothing about, there is no reference point. You struggle to associate colors, smells, dim memories. You live a little like a child, or an animal. Objects and events may bring things to mind, but in the end they remain no more than what they are in fact."¹⁶

¹⁶On the Road to Babadag: Travels in the Other Europe

Central Europe



The World of *On the Road to Babadag: Travels in the Other Europe*

Rășinari



Rășinari — a place of birth of Emil Cioran

Emil Cioran



Emil Cioran (1911-1995)

"There is approximately three hundred kilometers in a straight line between my Wołowiec and Warsaw. Of course, I cannot resist the temptation to draw a three hundred kilometer circle around Wołowiec to define my central Europe. (...) Inside there is a piece of Belarus, quite a lot of Ukraine, decent and comparable spaces of Romania and Hungary, almost all of Slovakia and a piece of the Czech Republic. And about a third of the Motherland. There is no Germany, no Russia - which I accept with some surprise, but also with a discreet, atavistic relief."¹⁷

¹⁷My Europe 2000

Andrzej Stasiuk's Europe





Andrzej Stasiuk
Dojczland

"They bring diamonds from the West because there's nothing else there.

They bring cars because East needs nothing else from West.

The cars finished their days in the sands of Mongolia"¹⁸

¹⁸Night 2005

*"They will employ Turks, Slavs and Asians to run their own country, and they will finally have a rest - because whatever it is, they, the Germans, have worked the most hard work of all Europeans in history. So they deserve rest."*¹⁹

¹⁹Dojczland 2007

*"I did not hear that they were friends with the Germans. The Germans were not suitable for friendship. They received German benefits, but in their stories the Germans did not appear as people. At most as employers, policemen or officials. a much nicer country if there were no Germans in it."*²⁰

²⁰Dojczland 2007

*"However, Germany is a bit of America. Most will be offended, but I'll stick with mine. The Germans are Americans at a slightly slower speed. Americans who had Luther, so they don't think they were born yesterday. The Americans who had Hitler and therefore are not so hey forward."*²¹

*"Germany was something like America for me. Some force was bursting it. It felt exactly in places like big truck terminals or highway junctions. Or railway junctions. In places where accumulated, compressed energy flows"*²²

²¹Dojczland 2007

²²Dojczland 2007

*"We are naive, simple-hearted and gullible here in the East. Ideas come to us and we believe them as true. We believed in communism and went to prisons for it. Then we believed in anti-communism, and in its name we were imprisoned by hundreds and thousands. I got imprisoned for rock'n'roll."*²³

²³My Europe 2000

The end

Thank you for your attention!